

DEPARTMENT OF STATE



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PANEL DISCUSSION WITH
THE HONORABLE HENRY A. KISSINGER
SECRETARY OF STATE
AND
THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF EDITORIAL WRITERS
HILTON HEAD, SOUTH CAROLINA
OCTOBER 2, 1976

JOHN ZAKARIAN, (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH): I would like to start out by introducing our panel tonight in alphabetical order.

Mr. Robert Barnard, Opinion Page Editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal and NCEW Treasurer-Elect. He has served in an editorial writing capacity in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and St. Petersburg, Florida. He joined the Courier-Journal in 1963 as Assistant Managing Editor.

The next panelist we have is Sig Gissler, Editorial Writer from the Milwaukee Journal, and former Executive Editor of the Waukegan News-Sun in Waukegan, Illinois. He has just spent a year at Stanford University as a professional journalism fellow.

The next panelist is Paul Greenberg, Columnist, Editorial Page Editor of the Pine Bluff Commercial. He is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana. He has won several awards, including the Grendel Clark Award for best editorial on world peace through world law, and the Pulitzer Prize in 1969.

And the last panelist is Joseph Stroud of the Detroit Free Press, and previously Associate Editor of the Free Press. Between 1964 and 1968, he was Editor of the Editorial pages in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and Editorial Writer of the Arkansas Gazette.

The British novelist, Thomas Hardy, once wrote "The dull period in the life of an event is when it ceases to be news and has not begun to be history."

Our guest tonight has not been in such a dull period since he went to Washington nearly eight years ago. Since then, he has been called many names. He is often referred to as "a highly placed source travelling with the Secretary of State." (Laughter) Some have introduced him as "Governor Nelson Rockefeller's tutor," some as the "husband of the charming and very intelligent Nancy Maginnes." He is known as "the masterful public servant who has travelled to Damascus thirty times, to Peking eight times, and to my native city of St. Louis once." (Laughter)

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He has also been called "the Lone Ranger of American diplomacy."

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to introduce the 56th Secretary of State of the United States, the Honorable Henry Alfred Kissinger.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the panel, I know that you are all prepared to ask me devastating questions. (Laughter) And I will just make a few introductory remarks in order to prepare myself psychologically for the event.

Of course, as a former professor, my normal speaking length is about 50 minutes, so you might as well get ready. (Laughter) And as a native of Germany, it may take me 25 minutes to place my first verb. (Laughter)

Well, you can have no question about the fact that I am here to tell you that American foreign policy is being brilliantly conducted, that all alternatives have been considered, and that the major purpose of the panel is to bring out the empirical facts that support this statement. (Laughter)

But I thought I could perhaps lead things off by making a few general observations about the conduct of foreign policy.

The basic foreign policy of the United States is determined by the objective conditions in which the United States finds itself, by the values of our people, and only to some extent by the views of the leaders. The foreign policy of a great nation cannot change every four or eight years. It must reflect some permanent characteristics. To the extent that other nations believe that the United States changes its fundamental policy at regular intervals -- to that extent, we become a factor of instability and insecurity.

Of course there are practical differences. And of course it can be that mistakes are made of such magnitude that a radical shift is necessary. But, sooner or later, we must develop a consensus about our fundamental direction and our basic interests that is not in itself subject to partisan debate. I am not saying it isn't subject to debate, but not to partisan debate.

The basic goals that any Administration has to pursue concern the problem of peace, the problem of world order, and the problem of the relationship of our values to the values of other societies.

The problem of peace has, in our age, an unprecedented character. Throughout history it would have been inconceivable that any nation could accumulate too much power for effective political use. As late as the end of World War II, every increment of additional power would have been militarily useful.

Today, we live in a period in which a nuclear war would mean destruction for all parties, and in which the relative advantage of one side against the other pales compared to the destruction that is involved, which

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could well be the end of civilized life as we understand it.

Therefore, the traditional power politics, the accumulation of marginal advantages, the posturing vis-a-vis opponents has to be carried out today, if at all, with a sense of responsibility and a degree of circumspection that is unparalleled. And every President will, sooner or later, be driven to the conviction which was first enunciated by President Eisenhower: "There is no alternative to peace."

Therefore, the problem of how to control nuclear arms, how to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, must be a paramount concern of American policy. And tough rhetoric is no substitute for the perception of this overriding necessity.

To be sure, we have to make certain that the desire for peace does not lead other countries to try to seek unilateral advantages. And we have to be able to combine a concern with our values and our interests, and those of our allies, with a readiness to seek honorable solutions with adversaries.

Where to strike this balance is one of the problems with which policy-makers have to deal, and which will no doubt come up in our discussions.

The second problem is the problem of world order. If it is true that conflicts cannot be settled by tests of strength, then we need an international system, most of whose participants feel that they have a stake in it, and are therefore not prepared to test it by military means.

This presents us with the problem of how to relate ourselves to our friends and allies; how to deal with opposing ideologies, committed to revolutionary theories, if not always practice; and how to find a place in such a world for the hundred or so new nations that have come into being since World War II, with experiences quite different and problems quite different from those of the older states.

And thirdly, there is the problem of the relationship of our values to the other goals of our foreign policy.

Without security, there can be no peace. But pure pragmatism leads to paralysis. It makes every problem insoluble.

Moral issues appear in absolute form. But in foreign policy, at any one time, only partial solutions are possible. And if every nation of the world insists on the immediate implementation of all of its principles, eternal conflict is inevitable.

Therefore, the difficult aspect of foreign policy is that one constantly has to strike balances between conciliation and security, between order and progress, between values and what can be attained at any period. This is where the act of judgment comes in -- an act that is compounded by the fact that when the scope for action is greatest, the knowledge on which to base such action in foreign policy is at a minimum. When the knowledge is greatest, the scope for action has often disappeared.

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Nobody can ever prove that an assessment is true until it is too late to effect it.

In 1936, when the Germans occupied the Rhineland, it would have been very easy for France to stop the advance of Hitler. But if they had done it, if France had done this, the world would still be debating today whether Hitler was a maniac bent on world domination or a misunderstood nationalist.

By 1941 everybody knew that he was a maniac bent on world domination. It was a knowledge acquired at the cost of 20 million lives.

So, the policymaker is always faced with the dilemma that when he can act, he cannot prove that he is right. And by the time he can prove that he is right, then he can no longer very often be creative.

Of course, not everything you cannot prove is right. And this is where the uncertainties in our debates arise and, frankly, where the credibility gap that our newspapers are so fond of emphasizing very often develops.

But I think I have explained enough perplexities to turn this over to the panel. And I see that all of our distinguished friends here have copious notes in front of them, so let me volunteer for assassination. (Laughter)

MR. ZAKARIAN: Mr. Barnard, from your copious notes, what question do you have?

MR. BARNARD: Mr. Secretary, this is a rather general (inaudible), typical of American editorial writers. You have just returned from your first African safari, I believe, and I wonder if Rhodesia's black-ruled neighbors agreed to the terms for a transitional government announced by Ian Smith. And there is still a question of funds for members of the white minority who choose to sell out and leave the country. What share of those funds -- which I think we have seen estimated at perhaps \$2 billion -- would the United States, in your view, be expected to pay? And would you anticipate any difficulty in persuading Congress to put out the money?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Let me perhaps first make clear one point. The terms that Mr. Smith announced were not terms he had originated and was putting to his neighbors. They represented a United States-United Kingdom distillation of months of consultations, of five missions, three American, two British and two African, of what we thought the best available compromise might be, that would move matters toward majority rule under conditions in which the rights of the minorities would be protected and under conditions in which the transition would occur with moderation and yet with all possible speed.

So, it is not something that was originated by Mr. Smith.

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On the whole, I believe that the program that is now being discussed has in many of its main elements been acceptable as a basis for negotiation. Of course, there are many elements that were left open -- the composition of most parts of the government. And of course every party at a negotiation is free to raise whatever issue it wishes. But much of what one reads today should be seen as a process by which the various parties establish their negotiating position.

Now, with respect to the fund, the fund we are discussing is not designed to buy out the white population. The fund is more designed to enable the white population to stay by developing the Rhodesian economy, and as only its second function is a sort of insurance scheme for those who want relief.

The fewer people, of course, the less has to be paid out of this fund for the purpose of the settlers.

Now, we are attempting to do this as an international project. The United Kingdom, France, and other European countries have already agreed in principle. We are discussing it also with Canada, Australia, and we hope to have a very wide base of support for it.

As far as the United States' own contribution is concerned, we think that perhaps part of it can be contributed from private sources. Discussions as to the amount, of the total amount, will begin next week in Washington, and we don't have a figure to put before the public yet. When we do, of course, the part of it that has to come from public funds will have to go to the Congress.

Will we get support for it? I believe that the American public will understand that the cost of a moderate evolution in southern Africa is much less than the ultimate cost of an escalation of violence there. And therefore, we hope that we can get support. We have briefed many Congressional committees. And so far, we haven't been able to give them any figures, but we have briefed them on the concept before we left and since we returned, and we have had very good and, I must say, bipartisan reaction on it.

MR. BARNARD: And what is your best estimate? The current uncertainty over whether black leaders will accept the terms announced (inaudible)

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You see, some of the things that the black leaders have rejected are not central to the issue. For example, whether the conference should take place inside Rhodesia, which Ian Smith proposed that was not part of the five-point program we recommended. And I think that this will have to find a solution by mutual agreement, because obviously a conference should take place at a place that is mutually acceptable.

I believe that, secondly, a lot depends on how some of the African nations sort out the relationship between the more moderate and the more radical elements.

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Our impression is that, as of now, progress is being made toward assembling the conference, and that the basic framework that they accepted in Lusaka, which is to say a conference which creates a transitional government which leads to a constitutional conference, which drafts a constitution for full independence -- that that framework is going to be implemented. It will take a few weeks to sort all of this out, but it is going about as we expected.

MR. GISSLER: Mr. Secretary, I have a perhaps personal question. Fatigue can often lead to slips in judgment. If your style of diplomacy is marked by hectic activity, shuttling, jet lag, hop-scotching, always with a briefcase full of explosive questions, I wonder, how do you deal with the inevitable stress and guard against diplomatic blunders occurring perhaps just through sheer exhaustion?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: By beating my dog. (Laughter)

MR. GISSLER: After the dog is dead, sir, what happens?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I don't know how you can guard against blunder. One problem may be that there is a gap between the public perception of how diplomacy is conducted and how it is actually conducted.

Before I go on one of these trips, there are months of very careful preparation. I do not go on one of these trips unless I and my colleagues have made the judgment that we have carried matters to the maximum point they can be carried through the exchange of diplomatic notes.

The shuttle that concluded last week was started in April with the speech in Lusaka, was carried forward through a series of meetings and a series of missions to Africa. And what we have to balance is the stress of this type of diplomacy against the problem that we might not be able to carry it off at all if one circulated notes.

But I am not saying that this style of diplomacy is the way it must be conducted by every Secretary of State and every President.

We have faced a number of issues that tended to crystalize in a dramatic way, and that required some intermediary to bring them to a point of decision in Africa, for example.

Now, I would think that in the negotiation on the constitution that is now started, the role of high-level diplomacy would be very minimum.

So I would say one cannot make a general judgment as to how foreign policy should be conducted. And any style of diplomacy has its risk of failures, and ultimately it has to be judged by its record.

MR. GREENBERG: Mr. Secretary, you come out for majority rule in Rhodesia. Would you also be in favor of majority rule in South Africa?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Yes, I am in favor of the principle of majority rule in South Africa, but I think one also has to understand that the situation in South Africa is infinitely more complicated than it is in Rhodesia, in the sense that the settlers have been there for hundreds of years, that a system has developed that is repugnant to us, but that it will take some time to change. And therefore, while I believe strongly that the system must be changed -- I have emphasized this in a number of public speeches -- I also believe that it would be in the interests of all the people, black and white, if it occurs in an evolutionary manner and without violence.

MR. GREENBERG: How would you envision this process? Would one day you be making a similar shuttle for South Africa, say?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I have to tell you quite candidly that I have no blueprint for the future of South Africa. I believe that the first, the major steps must be taken by the Government of South Africa, and that to the degree that it can be handled in the South African context, to that extent it would be to everybody's benefit.

If the problem becomes internationalized, it means it has almost certainly already got out of control. They now have some little time to consider the consequences of the internal situation in South Africa. And we hope that it will move in a -- that they will take advantage of this period.

MR. STROUD: Mr. Secretary, what reason do you have now to believe that the reconvening of the Geneva Conference on the Middle East would be productive? And isn't there the danger now that the critics who said that the step-by-step process would deal away some of your trump cards too early may be proven right?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: You always have to compare the -- of course, you have to remember that it is unlikely, despite my well-known objectivity, that I will agree with my critics. (Laughter)

But you always have to compare the alternatives that were in fact available. In 1973, the United States had no diplomatic relations with any of the key Arab countries. The Soviet Union was acting as the lawyer of the Arab countries. Israeli armies were confronting the Arabs along dividing lines that were extremely unstable.

To attempt a comprehensive solution under those circumstances involved -- if an oil embargo was still in force, to attempt a comprehensive solution under those circumstances involved a high risk of an explosion. And a step-by-step approach enabled the parties to get used to the process of negotiation, to gain confidence that progress could be made.

It was always envisaged that the step-by-step approach would sooner or later lead to a more comprehensive approach. It was never conceived as an alternative to a comprehensive solution, but as a step toward a comprehensive solution.

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I think now the conditions are approaching where comprehensive solutions can result. Whether it has to be one grand solution or whether a series of stages within a larger framework, that will have to be seen as the negotiations begin.

I do not believe that we have given away any key bargaining chips that will be needed later. On the contrary, I think we created conditions from which comprehensive solutions can now be attempted, without the risk of an explosion and without the risk of an alienation of some of the major countries involved.

MR. STROUD: What is the leverage from this point on?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, what was the leverage in 1973? In 1973, we were all subject to an oil embargo. We had no diplomatic relations with any of the key countries. And it is an illusion to believe that we had a leverage in 1973 that we have lost in 1976. The leverage that we have now is that we are the only country that is in friendly relations with all of the chief actors in this process.

We are the only country without whose help progress simply is not possible. And that leverage is the chief contribution we can make to the process. The basic leverage as to the Israelis and the Arabs is about what it was in 1973. That is to say, the Israelis have territory which the Arabs want, and the Arabs have legitimacy which the Israelis want.

Now, how to balance off the tangible return of territories, which has to be part of the settlement, against the Arab commitment to peace, which is certainly more revocable than is the giving up of territories -- that has been the essence of the negotiation all along. And the Israelis have not given up so much territory that this problem has changed.

This is the essential issue in the negotiation. What has improved is the readiness of the Arab countries to accept the existence of Israel. What has improved also is the greater confidence Israel has acquired in the process of negotiation. What has fundamentally changed is the diplomatic position of the United States in the Middle East, which is a dramatic reversal of what it was in 1973. And this is why the conditions now, either for a Geneva Conference or some other diplomatic process, seemed to us better now than they have been at any period since the end of the war.

MR. BARNARD: While we are on the Middle East, enormous supplies of arms seem to have poured into Lebanon and complicated the problem there. Can you tell us whether the United States or Israel has given either overt or covert support to any faction there, particularly the Christians. And, if not, where do you think all those arms have been coming from?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: The United States has not given any arms to any of the factions. We have no official knowledge of what Israel may have done. But the majority of arms, the overwhelming majority of arms in Lebanon come from the Soviet Union, one way or the other, either through Libya or through Syria.

The chief conflict is between the Syrians and the Palestinians, both of which are armed by the Soviet Union and come directly from Soviet sources

MR. GREENBERG: Mr. Secretary, there would seem to be at least one part of the Middle East where American policy would seem to have been very ineffectual, and that would be in Lebanon where we seem to have adopted a policy of just waiting for the blood to settle. I wonder if that doesn't raise the larger question of morality in foreign policy. A recent poll by the State Department indicates that Americans feel -- to quote one of its findings -- that Washington simply has not appeared to be animated in the last decade or so by the same root sense of right and wrong as the American people. How would you respond to that kind of feeling?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: First of all, let me make clear what the poll is.

The State Department -- we have started in the last year, in order to find out what the public is concerned about, to hold a series of town meetings around the country in which we have invited concerned citizens to state their criticism. And we are sending senior officials to sessions which are entirely devoted to the public expressing their concern. Our officials then write reports to me about what they consider to be these concerns, and we distribute these reports also to the newspapers in the towns where the town meetings were held. So this is not a very secret operation.

Now somebody leaked one of these reports in Washington that had already been distributed to the hometown newspapers of the people concerned.

I just want to make clear all of these reports are going to be critical, because the town meetings are organized to elicit concerns and not elicit approvals.

Now, let me get to your question of morality last, and deal with Lebanon first.

Whatever our moral convictions may be, we cannot carry them to the point where the United States must settle every conflict in every part of the world in order to be cured. We have in Lebanon passions that have been built up over centuries. We have armies that have been built up over decades.

For the United States to attempt to impose peace by our own forces would make us the policemen of the world. We have attempted to do our best to prevent outside intervention. We have sent a special envoy there. We have lost an Ambassador who was murdered there on a peace mission.

We have stopped short of military intervention, because that would require a massive degree of an American commitment that we do not feel is warranted in these circumstances. But we also believe that

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the evolution in Lebanon, painful as it is, could lead to a situation in which the overall peace process can be resumed under conditions where all of the parties have learned how tenuous and fragile the situation is.

This does not mean that we would not want to have the war ended as quickly as possible. And we have offered repeatedly our good offices. The only thing we have refrained from doing is to send in American military forces.

Now, on the basic question of the roots of American morality and its relationship to American foreign policy.

The United States for the greatest part of our history, or at least for the greatest part of our modern history, could live with the conviction that we could dip in and out of foreign policy as we chose. And we could be both isolationists and interventionists on the principle that we were morally superior to the rest of the world, partly caused by the fact that we never had to make the hard choices of security that countries that did not have two great oceans had to confront.

Now, in the Sixties and the Seventies -- the late Sixties and Seventies -- we have suddenly come up against the limitations of our power, and we now have to conduct foreign policy the way most other nations have had to conduct it throughout their history, where we cannot do everything we want, where we cannot implement all our preferences, and where we cannot impose all our values. And this produces a certain resentment, and it produces the illusion that somehow or other, we could go back to an earlier pattern, if only those in power were more morally committed.

Now, I am not saying that security considerations have to be dominant. In fact, I believe that without moral convictions to serve as a compass point, foreign policy becomes entirely practical and entirely irrelevant. But the role of our moral values in foreign policy is to give us the strength to approach our goals in stages, and to set a general direction which we hope is compatible with the values of our society.

But what the American people will be learning in the years ahead, as we have already learned in Viet-Nam and elsewhere, is how to reconcile our needs with our limits and how to be moral without being able to be absolutists. That is a very tough problem, and it is one of the uncertainties in our foreign policy.

MR. GREENBERG: Mr. Secretary, earlier you quoted President Eisenhower approvingly. Would you consider his intervention in Lebanon to have been a failure?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: No, I think that President Eisenhower, under the conditions that then existed, with the forces that were then at work in Lebanon, conducted an operation that was a marginal success. A similar (inaudible) the United States today would require many divisions, would involve us in all the inter-Arab disputes that you now see in Lebanon, and could not be justified to the American people by American purposes that we could explain afterwards.

After all, what is the conflict of Lebanon? You have the Christian community and the Moslem community that have coexisted side by side for many decades, but not always.

You have within the Moslem community, the splits between the radical factions and the moderate factions.

And you have the presence of the Palestinians who constitute almost a state within a state. All of this overlaid by Arab rivalries in which the Libyans and the Iraqis back the radicals, the Syrians have backed the moderate Arabs, and have cooperated with the Christians.

For the United States to inject American military power into such a situation, under present circumstances, would lead us into a morass.

I think there are certain situations which, tragic as they are, we cannot overcome with military power. And that is the only thing that we have not done in Lebanon.

MR. GISSLER: Mr. Secretary, your remarks about the moral core of American foreign policy suggest that certain widespread public understanding or an agreement on certain objectives is essential, yet some very thoughtful critics say that you have done relatively little, especially after the collapse in Viet-Nam, to stimulate the kind of great debate necessary in this country to achieve that kind of understanding.

I wonder if the hard truth is that top policymakers, even in a democracy are fearful of taking really tough questions to the people for thorough free-swinging discussion?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: When I was in private life, nothing used to infuriate me more than a public official who, when being questioned at my university, would explain that nothing he had ever done could possibly have been wrong.

Well, I am here to tell you that nothing I have ever done could possibly have been wrong. (Laughter)

There are two problems. Did I try to explain American foreign policy to the American people?

I think I have made a major effort. I have gone to 28 cities in the last 18 months. Wherever I have gone, I have given a speech. I have

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subjected myself to a question period from the audience. I have met with leaders of the community. I have met with the newspaper editors and publishers. I have spent the whole day in order to explain some aspect of foreign policy, as I understood it, and to respond to questions.

And we have had these town meetings which I described.

There is, however, inherent in high office, the problem that almost all of the problems one deals with are imposed on one, and that the time for reflection with the best will in the world is limited. And obviously--and I think this panel and this discussion prove it--it stands to reason that I have to believe that what we did was right or we wouldn't have done it.

Now, obviously, in retrospect, one can change one's mind about something. But, on the whole, if one has been serious and thoughtful, one will tend to believe that one was right.

So, as we go through eight years, you tend to accumulate a certain vested interest in the policies that have been carried out inevitably, and as you go through eight years, the times available for reflection are limited. This will be true of any possible successors as well as of any possible incumbent.

So, in the process of government, it may not always be possible, even with the best intentions, to put everything before the public. But, I have attempted to make a serious effort, and I think--I have spent a lot of time on the speeches that I have given publicly, but I am sure that there is always a lot more that could be done.

MR. GISSLER: Do you have any suggestions as to how we can raise the level of serious public discussions on questions like, for whom and for what we might be prepared to fight in the world, if necessary?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not sure that that is a question that can be answered in a serious public discussion by senior officials in this way.

I think we can ask, in a serious public discussion, what we take to be our basic purposes in the world; what kind of a world we are trying to bring about; what our overall conception is of the nature of the security of the nature of peace.

Those are questions, I think, that we can and should debate.

I think to ask a question in the abstract--are we prepared to fight, say, for Korea, without having answered these other questions first, is going to lead to a rather bitter debate that may not be very meaningful.

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MR. ZAKARIAN: Mr. Stroud.

MR. STROUD: Speaking of the debate about foreign policy issues, there is still great concern among many Americans about the Americans missing in action in Viet-Nam. And I am curious, is this a real impediment now to the normalization of relations with Viet-Nam? Or is the election the real impediment to the normalization of the relations with Viet-Nam?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that the missing in action are a real impediment to the normalization of relations with Viet-Nam.

Basically, we have no conflict with Viet-Nam now. After our experience in Viet-Nam, we are the one great power that can be guaranteed not to have any national objectives to achieve in Indochina.

So, eventually, the normalization of relations between us and Viet-Nam will come.

On the other hand, we believe that the behavior of the North Vietnamese in not turning over to us lists which we are confident they must have, is a cruel and heartless act, and one for which we are not prepared to pay any price.

If that is accomplished, normalization will follow very rapidly.

MR. STROUD: Can you define what sort of response would be considered adequate?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We would feel that there is no reason for the North Vietnamese not to turn over all the information they have on the missing in action. It would be a humane gesture. It is not something that does us any good as a nation, but it will help ease the minds of many hundreds of people.

We therefore believe that it should be done. It would wipe the slate clean. And we will certainly be prepared to normalize relations rapidly after that.

MR. ZAKARIAN: One last round of questions from the panel before we go to questions from the floor.

MR. BARNARD: Mr. Secretary, we know the Secretary of State and the American people endure a lot of election rhetoric --

SECRETARY KISSINGER: So far it has not been as bad as the primary rhetoric. (Laughter)

MR. BARNARD: Several weeks ago, you were quoted, I think, as saying that despite some of the things that Jimmy Carter was saying, you didn't see any substantial difference in the foreign policy.

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Since then, he has given the B'nai B'rith speech and has been quoted lustily in Playboy (laughter), referring again to you not only as "the Lone Ranger" but criticizing you for a number of your policies, including insufficient stress on morality and other assorted sins.

I notice it is creeping into the columns now, into at least one column, which presumably is a token of more to come, that there is some hope in the Carter camp that you can be hung around Ford's neck as some sort of albatross.

Does this change your perception of how a Carter Administration might operate in foreign policy?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I was asked on that occasion to comment on one speech, but that was before Governor Carter had developed the full complexity of his thought.

(Laughter)

Now that he has developed his thinking in several directions (laughter), I would not necessarily make the same statement again.

But the President will have an opportunity to debate foreign policy with Mr. Carter on Wednesday, and I don't want to pre-empt his preparations for this.

MR. ZAKARIAN: See you're whetting your knife.

MR. GREENBERG: There is one area of the foreign policy in which you might have a special knowledge or interest, and that is the arms sales abroad. The Democratic candidate for President has not been alone in deploring the size of American arms shipments abroad on the theory that they will actually ignite wars, and we will be drawn into them.

Do you see any of that sort of danger in the amount of armaments this country is shipping to various nations abroad?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: One has to analyze where the arms are going before one can judge whether they will ignite wars; and, secondly, whether the United States will be drawn into those wars, if they are ignited.

Many of the figures that are being used are vastly inflated. I see references, for example, to \$7.5 billion of arms to Saudi Arabia. Of that \$7.5 billion, the overwhelming part of it is going for construction by the Corps of Engineers, and it is not going for weapons. And it is technically in the military budget, but it is to build cantonments for the Saudi Army, and has nothing to do as such with the arms race.

Another percentage goes to Iran. Now, Iran has pursued a policy that has been very parallel to ours in the Middle East. It has not joined the embargo. It has declared that it wouldn't join the embargo. It has sold oil even to Israel during this period.

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Countries that threaten it are countries like the Soviet Union and countries armed by the Soviet Union, such as Iraq. And therefore, I cannot foresee --nor has Iran ever transferred arms to another country. So, it is difficult to foresee any war that Iran would start that would draw us in.

And to the extent that Iran is capable to protect itself, we are less likely to be drawn in than we would be if it were defenseless.

On the other hand, I do agree that we should look at the question of arms sales more systematically, and we have created now a new group to make sure that the question you put is being dealt with in a responsible manner.

It is my judgment that the arms sales have contributed much more to stability than to the opposite. But we are not pushing arms sales. We are responding to needs that countries feel--and most of which they would be in a position to get anyway from other sources.

MR. GREENBERG: But, Mr. Secretary, those figures on Saudi Arabia include something like 600-700 Sidewinder missiles.

Now, what possible defense justification could there be for a country like Saudi Arabia to have that many missiles, except perhaps to defend its interests against Iran, which we have also supplied with--

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Much more to defend its interests against some neighbors it has that are armed by the Soviet Union. And, of the Sidewinders, a large--a significant percentage is going to have to be used for training purposes. So that what will be left is a minimum defensive package. And if you look at the countries surrounding Saudi Arabia, you would not pick Iran as the most likely one to attack it.

MR. GISSLER: Mr. Secretary, your remarks addressed towards Iran as a potential policy quagmire bring to mind our tragedy in Viet-Nam.

It is often said that one thing we can salvage from Viet-Nam is a lesson. Yet there seems to be continuing disagreement over precisely what that lesson is. Some say it shows the limits of American imperialism. Others, including, I think the Republican platform writers, indicate that the lesson is that we should never again fight such a war unless we intend to fight it all out and win.

I wonder if you could tell us what you feel the fundamental lesson of Viet-Nam is?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I think that a fundamental lesson of Viet-Nam is that before the United States gets itself militarily engaged in any war, it must make an assessment of what its fundamental interest is, and, secondly, whether it can serve this interest by military means.

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I do agree that when the United States becomes militarily engaged, it should prevail, and if it cannot prevail, it should not engage itself.

But before the United States engages itself, it must have the perception, not in abstract slogans, but through the best analysis that can be made of what the fundamental American interest is, what the nature of its engagement is, and what limits we want to set to that engagement.

Otherwise, we are going to be drawn from one commitment to another, in order to make good the previous commitment. But it is important also to understand what involves a commitment. I do not believe that selling arms to a country commits us then to the series of events that led to Viet-Nam.

MR. GISSLER: What about South Korea. We are not just selling arms. We also have combat troops stationed there.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: South Korea--our interest in South Korea is produced by the confluence there of many power centers, by our historical relationship, and, above all, by the fact that Japan considers that its security is closely affected by what happens on the Korean peninsula.

And therefore, for the United States to suddenly disengage from Korea would have drastic consequences in Japan, and in all of Northeast Asia.

MR. STROUD: Mr. Secretary, in the wake of the fall of Saigon, you were quoted a number of times with a fairly pessimistic appraisal of the world perception of the U.S. after Viet-Nam, and the feeling we had a great need to reestablish the authority of the United States in the world, the credibility of the United States in the world.

Do you feel that that perception has changed significantly?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: We have to face the fact that it is a combination of the tragedies of the last four years. Many countries around the world were asking what the role of the United States--or to what extent it could rely on the United States as a stabilizing factor, or as a factor for progress.

I believe that since the collapse of Viet-Nam, we have conducted a policy that has restored some of our credibility and resolved some of the doubts, but it continues to be, for several reasons, including some of our domestic debates, one of the challenges of American foreign policy.

MR. ZAKARIAN: Members of the panel, thank you. We shall receive questions from the floor. We have about 15 minutes, and questions are open only to members of NCEW. Please state your name and your newspaper, and then ask the question.

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QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, my name is Smith Hempstone, and I am a syndicated columnist.

You were described, I believe, in the Oriana Fallaci interview several years ago as a historian having a tragic sense of destiny.

In Admiral Zumwalt's book, while he may have confused Athens with the Theban League, he puts across the impression, in his view, that you feel that your role has been one of trying to get the best deal possible in a declining power situation.

I wonder if you could tell us precisely how you do view your role in the past seven and a half years, and how you foresee the shape of the world evolving in the next few years, and America's role in it?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: First of all, I have nominated Admiral Zumwalt on a number of occasions for the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. (Laughter.)

I think it took him a while to realize that his opponent in Virginia was called Byrd and not Kissinger.

Anybody who has ever been on a train going to an Army-Navy game would think it is not the most suitable place for reflections on the philosophy of history (Laughter)--or normally believe that the participants in any conversation necessarily would recollect exactly what was said--particularly what was said on the way home from the game.

(Laughter.)

Now, what did I conceive to be my role?

I believe, seriously now, that I am likely to be more reflective about this out of office in 1981 than I am likely to be at this time. (Laughter.)

But, I have served in Washington during a period of fundamental transition when the United States had to liquidate a war which we found when we got there. The first such experiences in our history when we had to adjust our relations with our allies, when we had to find new ways of dealing with our adversaries, and when the revolution that is inherent in the process by which these new nations came into being is beginning to gather momentum.

It has been my conviction that we could not continue to operate by managing crises, or by abstract declarations of political intent, but that we had to develop some perception of the national interest that could be maintained over an indefinite period.

Now, this is a difficult thing to put across in America, because we have almost no strand in our foreign policy thinking that is geared to this.

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We have an idealistic tradition. We have a pragmatic tradition. We have an international law tradition. But we do not have a tradition of thinking of the world as a political process with no terminal date in which whatever you do only buys you an entrance price to another problem.

So, it is inevitable that there is a lot of debate. And it is inevitable that people who think that there should be neat and final solutions would believe that one preferred contingent solutions.

It is indeed my conviction that we cannot define a terminal date at which we can say all our problems have disappeared. We are now part of an international process which is unending insofar as I can foresee, which we can manage, which we can direct, and in which our purposes have to be clearly defined, but in which we can no longer sell our programs the way we did in the immediate post-war period by promising the American people an end to exertion and an end to problems, if only one more program were carried out.

And I think this explains some of the sort of criticism that Admiral Zumwalt makes.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, Stuart Loory of the Chicago Sun Times.

Coming back to your quotation from President Eisenhower about there being no alternative to peace, the Congress, within the past couple of weeks, appropriated \$104 billion for defense spending in the next year.

There are reports that the Pentagon is going to request \$130 billion in the authorization for next year.

Are you satisfied that the United States is spending the least amount of money necessary for defense to further American foreign policy aims?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am satisfied that we need, under present conditions, the amounts that have been requested. I am not satisfied that we can continue international relations indefinitely on the basis of an arms race.

And therefore, I have believed strongly that limitations of strategic arms and negotiations on the limitations of other arms are necessary.

I believe that the constant accumulation of armaments on both sides is going to lead to a situation that could have some of the characteristics that led to World War I, in which the political leadership at some point lost control over events.

But I do not believe that we can achieve this unilaterally. Until we can negotiate an agreed limitation of arms, I am afraid we have to match what the other side is doing.

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QUESTION: Gil Cranberg of the Des Moines Register and Tribune.

Mr. Secretary, the Church Committee reported that the U. S. has an extensive covert propaganda operation abroad. This involves having hundreds of foreign journalists on the U. S. payroll and the planting of false and misleading information, some of which unavoidably is picked up and published in this country.

The Church Committee complained about it. This organization is complaining about it. Our complaint was directed to the CIA.

Since this activity presumably is in the furtherance of U. S. foreign policy objectives, perhaps the complaint should have been directed to you.

In any case, would you tell us why you think such covert propaganda activity is desirable, and whether you would consider having it discontinued?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I don't believe that putting misleading information out as news is ever justifiable.

The problem arises that in many parts of the world, the media are dominated by, or heavily influenced by foreign powers that are hostile to us, and where some attempt is made to get our point of view across.

But I would not accept this to saying that it is ever justified to put out misleading information. I would think that any information that is placed through any American governmental organization should be such that it could be published here without misleading the American public.

QUESTION: So you disagree with the practice.

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I disagree with the practice of placing misleading information into foreign newspapers.

QUESTION: Do you have the power to order that?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I am not sure I have. If it was done in the past, I doubt very seriously that it is being done today.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I am Fred Sherman of the Miami Herald.

You achieved great success in the Middle East in getting the Israelis to talk to the Arabs. You pulled off an apparent miracle in Africa getting the white minority and the blacks to talk.

Do you think there is any Foreign Minister anywhere in the world with the same measure of genius that could get Havana and Washington off the same way? (Laughter.)

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SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, as to the first part of your question, the answer is obviously no. (Laughter.)

But as far as Havana and Washington are concerned, we were beginning to move towards normalizing relations when Cuba placed 15,000 troops into Angola.

This cannot be justified on any Cuban grounds.

That made clear that either Cuba is acting as a surrogate for the Soviet Union or it is pursuing a revolutionary foreign policy in distant parts of the globe, or what is more likely, it was a combination of the two.

That, plus the extremely aggressive Cuban policy vis-a-vis Puerto Rico, has made it very difficult for us to get into a sensible dialogue.

QUESTION: Sir, in your concern over the Rhodesian situation, did you have any fear that the Cubans might move into Rhodesia?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: I believe that there is a danger that if the evolution in Africa is not channelled into a moderate direction, that foreign intervention, whether Cuban or otherwise, would become more and more probable. As this accelerates, a race war becomes more and more inevitable. And if a major race war starts, it is bound to radicalize all of Africa and have serious consequences in other parts of the world.

And therefore, we are trying very hard to return African--the evolution in Africa into African hands, and to keep all foreign powers out, including ourselves.

MR. ZAKARIAN: One more question.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, I am Tom Caulfield from Savannah Morning News.

Partly, you--I don't think anyone at all has had much to say about the Soviet Union, so I will ask a question about that.

And this is a local question, because in Savannah, which is located 40 miles from here across the Savannah River, we had last week develop a situation in which an American company has announced intention to set up a redistribution headquarters in Savannah for the distribution of Russian-made automobiles. And this will employ about 150 people at the outset, and 300 people ultimately.

We have an anomalous situation therefore of a Communistic government being involved in a capitalistic society. And some people at home have expressed misgivings because Savannah was captured by the British and captured by the Yankees (laughter), and here perhaps is a good case for us to get captured again. (Laughter.)

But, my question is, this is an obvious product of detente. And in such a trade-off of American jobs for dollars going to Russia, who is the

net winner--the United States or the Soviet Union?

SECRETARY KISSINGER: Well, I don't believe that Savannah is going to be captured by Russian automobiles, unless they have developed a new one in the last few weeks.

(Laughter.)

But, to answer your question, who is the net winner in trade between the Soviet Union and the United States?

It is a difficult question to answer in the abstract. I would think that an economy of the size of ours can afford to trade with the Soviet Union without any danger of our economy being in any way significantly influenced by the Soviet Union.

The second question is whether our trade with the Soviet Union strengthens the Soviet Union in any competition they may engage in with the United States.

Well, this depends on what sort of trade we engage in, and also what moderation the Soviet Union shows in the conduct of its foreign policy.

If the Soviet Union conducts itself in an extremely hostile and aggressive manner, then I would think the possibilities for normal trade between our two countries would be very small.

If relations over a period of years become calm, if the Soviet Union shows restraint in other parts of the world, then I think trade, especially in non-strategic items, might contribute to giving an additional incentive for this moderation.

We have always believed that trade should follow political accommodation. And therefore a great deal depends on the basic state of our relations with the Soviet Union as to whether it is beneficial or not.

MR. ZAKARIAN: The Secretary has to return to Washington tonight. We hope he treats his dog kindly. (Laughter). We thank you, very much, sir, for sharing this evening with us. This has been stimulating and thought-provoking.

Thank you, very much. (Applause)